

Grafenwoehr Goes Prehistoric: Following Dinosaur Tracks Throughout Northeast Bavaria

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// When dinosaurs ruled the earth... Many Hollywood movies have been made with this theme in mind, but did you know that it is really only a small step from fiction to reality? You find out just how small, when you join us on an thrilling journey of exploration through time as we follow dinosaur tracks through Northeast Bavaria. Imagine the surrounding landscape changing; imagine mountains rising only to be worn away through wind and water; imagine the sea transgressing this area; imagine Germany, as you have never experienced it. Join us on a discovery of places where you can learn about the geological and paleontological history of our local countryside.

Travel back some 230 million years, and reach the era geologists refer to as the Triassic Period. The Triassic period was the onset of an evolutionary success story, marked by the emergence of dinosaurs. Dominated by a warm, arid climate, the Northeast Bavarian landscape looked very different, Archosaurs,

ancestors of T-Rex, roamed as did the mysterious Chirotherians, whose physical appearance is not known since skeletal remains have not yet been found, leaving traces of their existence to be later found in stone. The first of Chirotherian tracks were discovered in the area at the end of the 19th century and quickly peeked the interest of experts investigating other fossilized footprints. Although only a layer of sandstone remains from the dinosaurs' era, in several places in Northeastern Bavaria these deposits are bisected by clay lenses that contain special treasures - fossilized plants which have survived in detail for millions of years. These fossils provide a rare opportunity to "see" into the past.

In Germany, the Jurassic period, approximately 150 to 200 million years ago, is subdivided according to the predominant rock colors: black Lias (early Jurassic), brown Dogger (middle Jurassic) and white Malm (late Jurassic). For years,

Jurassic rock was used extensively as building material in Northeastern Bavaria, in fact, the light-colored limestone rock slabs from the area between Solnhofen and Eichstätt were used by Roman! An impressive example of a more later day use of these natural stones is the famous Wallhalla near Regensburg. Did you know that quarries

do not owe their worldwide fame to the technical possibilities but rather to the abundance of wonderfully well-preserved fossils? In 1796, the Solnhofen limestone rock slabs gained worldwide technical importance through the invention of lithography (printing stones) by A. Senefelder.

In the Jurassic period dinosaurs achieved giant forms, as evidenced in Colorado(USA) and Tanzania (Africa) findings, but in Bavaria evolution took on a very different form. Feather covered dinosaurs, the size of chickens, took to the sky - maybe. Experts still debate Archaeopteryx lithographica's existence, whether it could actually fly, or whether it was simply a tree climber with featherlike features. Undisputed the fact that all ten fossils came from the quarries of the Franconian Alb and many are on display so you can take a look and formulate your own theory.

In the Cretaceous Period, 65 to 140 million years ago, iron lodes of the historical Amberg-Sulzbacher iron mining region formed. Today mining is only a memory, but economic historians coined the label, "Ruhr District of the Middle Ages," and emphasis the economic importance raw material processing played in the development of this region.

There are many more opportunities to explore the geological history of Northeast Bavaria in and around the U.S. Army Garrison Grafenwoehr, to include the Continental Deep Drilling Project in Windischeschenbach; Gold Mining Museum in



A replica of an Archaeopteryx.

Goldkronach; the impressive caverns of the Franconian Switzerland area; and, the Primeval World Museum ("Urweltmuseum") in Bayreuth. All await your visit.

Exhibitions in the Grafenwoehr Library and the 1st Oberpfälzer Cultural and Military Museum in Grafenwoehr provide a good starting point for all dinosaur trekking outings planned for the year 2007. You might also consider accompanying a team from the Grafenwoehr Library, Bavarian-Bohemian Geopark, University of Erlangen, and other scientific organizations, on a fascinating journey through 250 million years of geological history of Northeastern Bavaria through a series of lectures and excursions, including fossil digs and exploration of closed gold mine.

The exhibit begins April 30th in Bldg 244 and continues through September. Contact the Grafenwoehr Library at DSN: 475-1740 for more information on *Grafenwoehr Goes Prehistoric: Following Dinosaur Tracks Throughout Northeast Bavaria events!*



200 million-year-old footprint of an Archosaur